GNOSTICS IN ASIA MINOR IN THE EARLY SECOND CENTURY?
IGNATIUS AND OTHERS AS WITNESSES AGAINST BAUER

I. INTRODUCTION
Walter Bauer’s book *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum* was published in 1934; the English translation, entitled *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* and published in 1971, gave the book a new lease of life. This book has had a huge impact on scholarship on the New Testament and the early Church. It is to this work and its legacy that I will devote this paper.

Bauer summarised his argument in this way: “Perhaps – I repeat, perhaps – certain manifestations of Christian life that the authors of the church renounce as ‘heresies’ originally had not been such at all, but, at least here and there, were the only form of the new religion – that is, for those regions they were simply ‘Christianity.’ The possibility also exists that their adherents constituted the majority, and that they looked down with hatred and scorn on the orthodox, who for them were the false believers.” Both chronological and numerical dimensions were important in Bauer’s argument. He thought that what would later be called heresy was often “primary” and hence the original form of Christianity, and that in some places and at some times, heresy had a numerical advantage and outnumbered what came to be called orthodoxy.

Bauer did not use the phrases “Lost Christianities” or “Lost Scriptures”, but they are clearly implicit in his work. If heresy was the earliest form in some places, then it has a certain primacy, which suggests it should not have been suppressed, nor its writings lost. And if what became “orthodoxy” was a minority in some places, with heresy actually being dominant, then some would argue that the decisions in favour of “orthodoxy” can be seen as very political decisions, which may involve power and politics more than a claim that this particular form of Christianity was a faithful witness to Jesus Christ. Thus the claim that what became orthodox Christianity involved the triumph simply of “the winners”, gains much support from Bauer. But

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1. It was translated by the Philadelphia Seminar on Christians Origins, edited by Robert Kraft and Gerhard Krodel, and published by Fortress. The original German edition was published by J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) in Tübingen.

2. Bauer, *Orthodoxy* xxii. Strecker helpfully summarised Bauer’s thesis in this way (see Bauer, *Orthodoxy* xi): “In earliest Christianity, orthodoxy and heresy do not stand in relation to one another as primary to secondary, but in many regions heresy is the original manifestation of Christianity.” Bauer also argued that from the early second century, Roman Christianity was the dominant influence in the formation of orthodoxy; on this see F.W. Norris, “Ignatius, Polycarp, and I Clement: Walter Bauer Reconsidered,” VC 30 (1976) 23-44, here 36-41. Norris notes (41): “Bauer’s second thesis fails to stand up to scrutiny because he underrated the strength and influence of centers in Asia Minor and Syria”.

Bauer’s thesis also raises the issue of the extent and nature of diversity in earliest Christianity and it asks us to examine what might hold the movement together, and hence allow us to speak of any sort of unity.

Bauer’s work has been very influential in the on-going discussion of these matters. Writing in 1971, Jaroslav Pelikan could say that “Bauer’s thesis has shaped an entire generation of scholars since its first appearance in 1934.” In 1981, Robert Wilken aptly said that Bauer had created “a new paradigm.” Helmet Koester explicitly follows Bauer’s approach in a number of his works, and scholars such as Gerd Lüdemann and Bart Ehrman also indicate their support for Bauer. Bauer’s influence continues to be alive and well.

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4 Hill (Johannine Corpus 13) notes that Bauer’s thesis has been challenged but “Nevertheless, as a grand, organizing principle for understanding the spread of Christianity in the second century, his approach has retained much of its force among scholars, particularly since the appearance of the English translation of the book”.


How did Bauer argue his case? Bauer started with a geographical approach, and investigated Christian communities in Edessa, Egypt, Asia Minor and Rome; he discussed Ignatius in relation to Antioch and Polycarp in relation to Smyrna; and then turned to themes such as the influence of Roman Christianity, the use of literature in various conflicts, the role of the Old Testament, and traditions about Jesus and the Apostles.

In this paper I will focus particularly on what Bauer says about Western Asia Minor. This is an area for which we have some good sources, and so provides a useful testing ground for Bauer’s thesis. Can Bauer’s thesis be sustained for Western Asia Minor? If it does not hold here, questions are raised about whether it holds elsewhere. Here I will draw on Revelation and particularly on Ignatius, and then more broadly on literature from Western Asia Minor.

II. IGNATIUS

Ignatius was the bishop of Antioch in Syria (Ign. Rom. 2.2), where he was arrested and sent to Rome under armed guard (Ign. Rom. 5.1). He probably travelled by ship from Antioch to a port on the southern coast of Asia Minor, although he could have gone by land. Ignatius passed through Philadelphia, where he met Christians from that community (Ign. Phld. 7.1). He then travelled to Smyrna where he got to know Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, and where he was visited by Christians from Ephesus, Magnesia and Tralles, whom he had contacted to inform them of his journey. He then wrote letters to each of these communities in return, and also to the church in Rome. He then went on to Troas, and from there he wrote to the churches of Philadelphia and Smyrna and also to Polycarp. We know that he was then


11 Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers* 204 thinks he travelled by land over Asia Minor.


13 Ephesus, Magnesia and Tralles did not lie on Ignatius’ direct route, as he notes in Ign. Rom. 9.3. Hence W.R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) 12 comments “en route across Asia Minor someone had gone on to Ephesus, Magnesia and Tralles to alert the Christians of those communities to Ignatius’ arrival in Smyrna.” See also V. Corwin, *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch* (Yale Publications in Religion 1. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), 16. Further, messengers who had previously been sent to Rome to prepare for Ignatius’ arrival there are probably referred to in Ign. Rom. 10.2 (see Schoedel, *Ignatius* 191), which increases the likelihood that messengers had also been sent to Ephesus, Magnesia, and Tralles to encourage the Christians in those places to send representatives to see Ignatius. We do not know if Ignatius contacted other Christian communities who did not send representatives to visit him. Ign. Mgn. 15 suggests he did not have the opportunity to write to all the churches who sent representatives to visit him in Smyrna. Schoedel (Ignatius 132) notes: “He probably gave special attention to those whose representation seemed most to demand it.”


15 He wrote to Rome to tell them of his impending arrival and to urge them not to attempt to prevent his martyrdom.
taken to Philippi (Pol. Phil. 9.1); we do not know for certain that he was martyred in Rome, although we have no reason to doubt this.\textsuperscript{16}

Although the authenticity of Ignatius’ letters has been challenged a number of times, most recently by Hübner, most scholars agree that what is called the middle recension of the seven letters is reliable.\textsuperscript{17} Dating the letters is somewhat uncertain, but a date between 105-110 CE seems to be the most plausible.\textsuperscript{18}

III. BAUER’S USE OF REVELATION AND OF IGNATIUS’ LETTERS WITH REGARD TO WESTERN ASIA MINOR?

How does Bauer use Ignatius’ letters – and other documents too - in his argument? Do they support his reconstruction of Christianity in Western Asia Minor? Here I will argue that Ignatius is actually a witness against Bauer, on four significant points.\textsuperscript{19} I will draw on Revelation too.

\textsuperscript{16} Polycarp, in writing to the Philippians presumed that Ignatius had died a martyr’s death but was not certain (Pol. Phil. 9.2; 13.2). Similarly, Eusebius (H.E. 3.36.3) noted only that “The story goes that he was sent from Syria to Rome to be eaten by beasts.” On the unity of Polycarp’s letter to the Philippians, including a convincing critique of Harrison’s views, see Hartog, Polycarp 69-72, 148-169. Polycarp’s letter would have been written quite soon after Ignatius’ journey through Philippi (Hartog, Polycarp 169 suggests within a year this journey), since at the time of writing Polycarp is seeking further details about Ignatius’ death (see Hartog, Polycarp 166-8), and so can be dated to around 115 CE; see Hartog, Polycarp 169.


\textsuperscript{18} In his Chronicon, written early in the fourth century, Eusebius dates both Ignatius’ martyrdom and Pliny’s letter to Trajan in the tenth year of Trajan’s reign, which was 107 CE; see also H.E. 3.36. There is no compelling reason to reject this placement in Trajan’s reign (although Eusebius seems to have no accurate information about the year itself), and so the majority of scholars have dated the letters between 98 and 117 CE. But can we be more precise than this? Ignatius calls for Christians to meet more frequently (I gn. Pol. 4.2; I gn. Eph, 13.1) which suggests Christianity was not regarded as an illegal collegium at this time. We should contrast this implied situation with Pliny’s remark to Trajan (Ep. 10.96): “Even this practice [partaking of food], however, they had abandoned after the publication of my edict, by which according to your orders, I had forbidden political associations.” This shows that in Pontus and Bithynia in Pliny’s time some Christians had stopped meeting for communal meals because of pressure from the Romans. Since it is likely that Pliny wrote Ep. 10.96 in 110 CE (see A.N. Sherwin-White, The Letters of Pliny: A Historical and Social Commentary (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966) 80-1, 691), C. Trevett, A Study of Ignatius of Antioch in Syria and Asia (Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 29. Queenston, Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), 6 notes: “if such an edict had not been applied in the eastern provinces before the time of which Pliny wrote, then possibly (given Ignatius’ seeming lack of fear of action against such gatherings) a pre-111 CE date for the letters is indicated.” See the discussion of the rest of the evidence in Trevett, Study 3-8. J.B. Lightfoot, The Apostolic Fathers Pt II; S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp (3 vols.; London: Macmillan and Co, 1889) 2, 435-72 and Schoedel (Ignatius 5) argue for 100-118 CE; Corwin (St. Ignatius 3) dates the letters between 108 and 117 CE; M. Hengel (The Johannine Question (London: SCM Press, 1989), 14 and 152 n84) opts for a date not later than 113; Hartog (Polycarp 58-60) argues for before 117, perhaps 114; Hill (Johannine Corpus 421) for around 110 CE.

\textsuperscript{19} Note that in Appendix 2 (“The Reception of the Book” by G. Strecker, revised and augmented by R.A. Kraft) of the English edition of Bauer’s book (Orthodoxy 286-316), and in response to reviews, Bauer’s treatment of the evidence from Ignatius is described as “Especially open to question”, along with some other areas. Two other points can be briefly made. Bauer (Orthodoxy 62) thought that the emergence of monepiscopacy points to a time of opposition and conflict, when one person seeks “a dictatorship that would establish the supremacy of his own party”. This led him to think that the “orthodox” were a minority. But this is to attempt to explain a complex development in purely psychological and sociological terms, and the development of monepiscopacy is better seen as a process, with the earlier stages being evident in the Pastoral and elsewhere; see further Turner, Pattern 61; Norris, “Ignatius” 24-9. Secondly, Bauer (Orthodoxy 68-9) fails to recognize elements of Ignatius’ rhetoric, which means we should not read all that Ignatius says on the same level. On Ignatius’ rhetoric
1. The nature of Ignatius’ opponents

Bauer thought that Ignatius wrote about one group of opponents in the churches of Western Asia Minor and that they were what he calls Judaizing Gnostics. Gnosticism in particular is regarded as a major threat, and those groups which were not orthodox or were not written to by John in Revelation or by Ignatius were seen by Bauer as Gnostics.

There has been much subsequent study both of Gnosticism, and of these opponents. It now seems most likely that Ignatius faced two sets of opponents - Judaizers in Magnesia and Philadelphia, and docetists in Tralles and Smyrna and of whom he warned in Ephesus. The identity of the opponents is significant with regard to discussion about the origin and development of Gnosticism, which has itself become a problematic category. It is important to note that most scholars would not now want to argue that Ignatius faced fully-developed “Gnosticism”.

But, with regard to Ignatius’ opponents, Bauer’s thesis can be countered to some extent. As we have noted, one element of Bauer’s overall thesis was that what came to


20 See Bauer, Orthodoxy 78. Bauer (Orthodoxy 78) also thinks that John in Revelation is writing “in opposition to a false teaching of an unmistakably Gnostic brand – a heresy which pursues its path within the churches themselves, and not alongside them.” Bauer (Orthodoxy 78) thinks Ignatius opposes the same teaching. See also R. Knopf, Das Nachapostolische Zeitalter. Geschichte Der Christlichen Gemeinden Vom Beginn Der Flavierdynastie Bis Zum Ende Hadrians (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1905) 290-3 to which Bauer refers.


be called heresy at times was the original form of Christianity. Is this the case where we can investigate the matter in Western Asia Minor?

In Rev 2:8-11 John writes to the church in Smyrna. The main issue concerns slander from the local Jewish synagogue. Nothing is said about docetism, which features in Ignatius’ letter to Smyrna.

With regard to docetism, it seems clear that it only emerges in its most rudimentary form towards the end of the NT period. Hengel argues that docetism is the result of what he calls the first Hellenization of Christianity. Hengel writes: “docetism’ which did away with the scandal of the death of Jesus on the cross in the interest of the impassibility of the God of the philosophers demonstrates that the gnostic systems are secondary attempts at an ‘acute Hellenization’ of the Christian creed, i.e. necessary consequences of a popular philosophical influence. On many occasions in the Graeco-Roman world we come across the idea that offensive happenings should not be ascribed to revered divine beings or demi-gods themselves, but only to their ‘representations’.”

Thus, Hengel sees in the view that Jesus only seemed to be of real flesh, an attempt to accommodate Christian belief to Greco-Roman views about divinity and thus to make Christianity compatible with the Greco-Roman mindset. Hence the actual nature of docetism seems to presuppose an underlying high Christology to start with. Jesus is first seen as divine, and then as a subsequent move, and because of certain views of the incompatibility of true deity with real humanity, Jesus’ humanity is seen as partial, or as an allusion, or it is said that he only seemed to be crucified. Accordingly, it is unlikely that docetism was the first form of Christianity in any centre, whether Tralles, or Smyrna, or elsewhere.

It is possible that docetic teachers travelled to Smyrna from elsewhere, but we note that there is no hint of docetism in John’s letter to the community in Smyrna in Rev 2:8-11, which suggests that docetism developed in Smyrna between 95, when John probably wrote Revelation, and 110. It is not then the “original” form of Christianity in Smyrna.

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23 M. Hengel, Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross (London: SCM Press, 1977) 16 (emphasis added). Note that Hengel calls docetism “gnostic”; in my view, it would be better to simply speak of “docetism” here. Note also Hengel, Crucifixion 15: “With its paradoxical contrast between the divine nature of the pre-existent Son of God and his shameful death on the cross, the first Christian proclamation shattered all analogies and parallels to Christology which could be produced in the world of the time, whether from polytheism or from monotheistic philosophy. We have points of comparison for the conceptions of exaltation, ascension and even resurrection. But the suffering of a god soon had to be shown to be mere simulation.” And Hengel, Crucifixion 21 (emphasis original): “Thus we can understand all too well how in the pseudo-scientific, popular Platonic arguments used in Gnosticism, this scandal [of the cross], which deeply offended both religious and philosophical thought in antiquity, was eliminated by the theory that the Son of God had only seemed to be crucified. In reality he did not suffer at all.” See also Markschies, Gnosis 55.

24 This explains that the first real hints of docetic-type views are found with regard to the secessionists of 1 Jn 2:18-19 22; 4:1-3 and 2 Jn 7, to be dated around 90-100 CE; see Trebilco, Early Christians 271-88.

Further, Ignatius writes of Judaizers in Magnesia and Philadelphia. We have no other information for Magnesia but John also writes to Philadelphia in Rev 3:7-13 and gives no indication of Judaizers there. This is not because John hesitates to point out the errors of the seven churches – far from it. So, it seems unlikely that a Judaizing form of Christianity was the original form of Christianity in Philadelphia. Hence, we can counter Bauer’s general thesis that “heresy” is early and strong with regard to the situation in these centres.

2. The churches to which John in Revelation and Ignatius did not write

Bauer thought that the churches to which John in Revelation and/or Ignatius did not write were heretical; John and Ignatius avoided these communities because they knew they could not gain any support there. Hence, Bauer builds up a list of “heretical” communities simply by noting known Christian communities to which John or Ignatius did not send letters.

For example, we know that a Christian community was established in Colossae by Epaphras (Col 1:7-8; 4:12), and was addressed by Paul in Colossians. But neither John in Revelation, nor Ignatius wrote to Colossae. Similarly, there was a Christian community in Hierapolis (Col 4:13), which neither John nor Ignatius addressed. To explain this Bauer suggests: “John selected the most prominent communities from those in his area which met the prerequisite of seeming to afford him the possibility of exerting a real influence.”

Thus, Bauer infers that John did not write to some communities – such as Colossae and Hierapolis – because they did not agree with him theologically, and so are to be seen as heretical. Bauer notes that Ignatius does not write to these communities either. He writes: “The community of Hierapolis (Col 4.13) and that of Colossae are bypassed in icy silence by both John and Ignatius.”

What do we make of this argument? Colossae was overshadowed by Hierapolis (15 miles away) and particularly Laodicea (11 miles away), which was the most prominent city in the Lycus Valley by the Roman imperial period. Colossae was probably hit by an earthquake in 60 CE, but we do not know how quickly it recovered, since it has never been excavated. It is precarious to argue that John and...
Ignatius both chose not to address the Christian community in Colossae because they knew it was “heretical” and so not in agreement with them. It is just as possible that the Christian community was very small in the city between 95 and 110 because of the slow recovery from the earthquake.

What of Hierapolis? We learn of the Christian group in the city from Col 4:13 and it is likely that Philip and some of his daughters settled in Hierapolis sometime around 70 CE.33 Papias, who wrote “An Exposition of Dominical Sayings” between 120-135 CE, was bishop of Hierapolis.34 To say that John and Ignatius avoided writing to the Christian community in Hierapolis because of it theological position is possible, but given our very fragmentary knowledge, seems unwise.

We should also note that scholars have had very different views about why John chose his particular seven churches.35 It is possible that they were all on a postal route as Ramsay suggested,36 but positive evidence for this is lacking.37 Was it simply that, as an itinerant prophet,38 these were the churches with which John had had regular contact? He knows their situation well, and clearly has had pastoral involvement with them in the past (see for example Rev 2:21); there would be a limit to the number of churches with which John could have had such pastoral interaction.39 Thus, he may not have written to Colossae and Hierapolis simply because he did not know them well - they were not part of his “circuit” as it were. But the fact that we can give a range of possible explanations for John’s choice of churches – and hence for why he

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M. Barth, H. Blanke, Colossians. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1994) 9-10 note that coins minted about 150 CE attest that Colossae was in existence at that time, but we do not know anything more about the late first century. See also Robinson, Bauer Thesis 151-2. Unfortunately there are no Christian inscriptions from this area from the second century, which might aid us here; see S. Mitchell, Anatolia. Land, Men and Gods in Asia Minor (2 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) 2, 37-43. For the later history see J.B. Lightfoot, Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Colossians and to Philemon (2d ed.; London: Macmillan and Co, 1875) 45-72.


34 See the discussion of dating in Hill, Johanne Corpus 383-4: he suggests Papias wrote “probably in the 120s or possibly as late as the early 130s.” Compare W.R. Schoedel, “Papias,” in ANRW II.27.1, 1992, 235-70, here 236-7 who opts for a date around 110. On Papias in general see Schoedel, “Papias” 235-70.

35 On the symbolism of the number seven, see A. Yarbro Collins, “Numerical Symbolism in Jewish and Early Christian Apocalyptic Literature,” in ANRW, II.21.2, 1984, 1221-1287, here 1275-9. Aune (Revelation 1-5, 29) comments “The number is not chosen to symbolize the universal Church … (since ‘seven’ does not symbolize ‘completeness’ …). Rather, the number seven emphasizes the divine origin and authority of the message of John, since seven is primarily a number with cosmic significance and is therefore associated with heavenly realities.” Whilst the number seven is clearly symbolic, this does not tell us why John chose these particular seven churches. It remains possible that he intended these seven to be representative of a range of spiritual conditions.


37 See Aune, Revelation 1-5, 131 notes “Ramsay’s hypothesis of a circular post road has no firm basis in archeological fact but is rather an inference based on the location of cities.”


39 Aune (Revelation 1-5, 131) notes that all seven were within 100 miles of Ephesus “and might have formed an established circular route for itinerant Christian prophets and teachers, perhaps since Paul’s day.”
did not choose some other places – means that we cannot infer that the communities he left out were heretical.

What of the communities addressed by John but not by Ignatius? Ignatius writes to three of the communities addressed by John – Ephesus, Smyrna and Philadelphia – but does not address four of John’s seven churches – Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis and Laodicea. Bauer asks: “Is it by chance that the communities of Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, and Laodicea are missing from Ignatius’ audience – communities that [John] the seer vehemently rebukes. … Is it too much to claim if, on the basis of what Ignatius both says and does not say, and considering the evidence of the Apocalypse, one concludes that in his attempt to stretch the circle of his influence as widely as possible for the sake of his constituency there was nothing Ignatius could hope for from the Christian groups represented at Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, and Laodicea, because no points of contact existed for him there – no ‘bishop’ was present whom he could press into service, because the heretics had maintained, or had come to exercise, leadership there?”

Yet we do not know why Ignatius chose to write to particular communities. Ignatius clearly did not determine the route that he took through Asia Minor – nor do we know exactly what that route was. So it is futile to speculate that he went through a particular place and yet ignored the Christians there. This is entirely an argument from silence, and again there are alternative explanations. Take Sardis as one example. John writes to Sardis, but Ignatius does not. Does this mean that by 110 it had been lost to heretics, as Bauer suggests? This is possible, but it is an argument from silence. We should note that since Bauer wrote, Melito’s On the Pascha has been discovered. This is probably to be dated a little before 164 CE, so too late to be decisive in this debate. The text does not explicitly refer to Christians in Sardis, but clearly it shows that there was a community of Christians in the city in the 160’s. Whilst we cannot deduce from this sermon what the situation was in the city 50 years earlier, it is at least clear that in the 160’s Sardis was not a city which only had heretical Christians. Further, the discovery of Melito’s sermon

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40 Bauer (Orthodoxy 78) writes: “Subsequently, Ignatius apparently followed a similar procedure [to John] and in turn made a selection from among those seven communities.”

41 See Schoedel, Ignatius 11-12.

42 See further Norris, “Asia Minor” 374-5. Bauer is aware of the problem of using the argument from silence, but continues to do so. He writes (Orthodoxy 74): “Were I not fearful of misusing the argument from silence, I would now have to raise the question as to why we hear nothing at all about the community in neighbouring Thessalonica in this connection?” But, despite the caution, he writes at length about the community at Thessalonica, and makes much of the fact that Polycarp does not seem to have written to Thessalonica (when he did write to Philippi) and that Ignatius had asked the Philippians to be involved in the support for Antioch (Pol. Phil. 1.1. 9.1, 13.1-2), but not the Thessalonians. He suggests that the explanation is that at Thessalonica the majority were “heretics” (p74-5). But this is totally an argument from silence. But he admits (Orthodoxy 75) “To be sure, this is only a conjecture and nothing more!”

43 See Bauer, Orthodoxy 79-80.

44 On the date see Hill, Johannine Corpus 294-5; see also S.G. Hall, Melito of Sardis on Pascha and Fragments. Texts and Translations (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979) xxii.

45 There are very few references to the audience of Melito’s Peri Pascha (PP), but note the address as “beloved” (PP 2, 35) and references to “us” (PP 67), and “our salvation” (PP 69); see also PP 103.

reminds us of the fragility of the argument from silence – which is what Bauer’s argument is at this point. So, the further evidence that has been discovered since Bauer’s time certainly does not support his view.\textsuperscript{48}

But we can note that Bauer’s argument from silence – which he used extensively – is fragile. We cannot say that there were heretical communities in Colossae, Hierapolis, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis and Laodicea simply on the basis that John and/or Ignatius did not write to these places.

3. Some disagreements with the bishop were related to church structure, rather than to theology

In Bauer’s view, “all his [Ignatius’] letters to the Asiatic Christians bear eloquent testimony to this acute danger of heresy.”\textsuperscript{49} Bauer reaches this opinion in part by taking all dissension, all indications of conflict with the bishop, as evidence for theological disagreement between the (orthodox) bishop and (heretical) church members.\textsuperscript{50} Now while clearly theological issues were sometimes at stake in the disputes Ignatius reports, this was certainly not always the case, and Bauer overlooks this. We will argue here that on some occasions, the reasons for people “opposing the bishop” was that a change in church structure was occurring, with which some Christians in Western Asia Minor did not agree. This is not evidence for “heresy” then.\textsuperscript{51}

\textsuperscript{48} Note also that the little we know of Laodicea in the second century indicates it was not heretical. Bruce (in \textit{ABD} 4, 231) notes the warning to the church in Rev 3:14-22 and goes on “The warning was apparently effective: the church of Laodicea continued for long to maintain its Christian witness. Between A.D. 161 and 167 a bishop of Laodicea, Sagaris by name, suffered martyrdom. In his time, said Melito, bishop of Sardis, at the beginning of his Easter Festival, there was much debate at Laodicea about the proper day for the celebration of Easter (Euseb. \textit{Hist. Eccl.} 4.26.3).” But again, this evidence is too late to be definitive with respect to Bauer’s views.

\textsuperscript{49} Bauer, \textit{Orthodoxy} 65. He also thinks that there was an acute danger from heresy in Antioch; see 63-7. However, it is far from clear that the problem in Antioch (which led Ignatius to ask for a range of churches in Asia Minor to send representatives to visit Antioch, or to write letters) was a doctrinal issue; see Ehrman, \textit{Apostolic Fathers} 208. We note that Ignatius was told that the church at Antioch had regained its “peace” (see Ign. \textit{Phld.} 10.1; Ign. \textit{Smyrn.} 11.2-3; Ign. \textit{Pol.} 7), but it seems unlikely that the victory of one theological group over another could be announced in quite these terms. If the initial trouble was caused by theological differences, we would expect Ignatius to say that the trouble makers had left, or something similar; given Ignatius’ concerns about different doctrine, if false teachers (if such there were) had remained as part of the church but simply agreed not to teach different doctrine, it seems very unlikely that Ignatius would describe this as “peace”. The decisive arrival of “peace”, as Ignatius announces it, sounds as if it is about quite a different matter. It seems more likely that “peace” refers to the appointment as a successor to Ignatius of someone who shared his views about episcopacy. If this was the case, then Bauer’s view of the predominance of “heresy” at Antioch is undermined. Again, Bauer is probably wrong to see all conflict as theological. See also Hultgren, \textit{Rise} 12-13; Hartog, \textit{Polycarp} 75-6.

\textsuperscript{50} See for example Ign. \textit{Trall.} 2-3 and 12.2-3 with their summons to submit to the bishop, which is dealt with below, which Bauer (\textit{Orthodoxy} 68-9) interprets as relating to theological matters (he writes of Ign. \textit{Trall.} 2-3, “which make her seem to be particularly susceptible to false teaching (\textit{Trall.} 6”) ). He also includes Tralles in his discussion about heretical minorities on p69. Note also his comments on p67, where, having just discussed heresy, he argues that the various bishops in Asia Minor did not exercise “unlimited power over the shaping of Christian faith and life in those cities”, again interpreting all conflict as doctrinal.

\textsuperscript{51} Here I am building on the work of Trevett, “Prophecy” 1-18 (see also \textit{Study} 194-203), who argued that Ignatius was confronting a third group who opposed his notion of monepiscopacy. However, rather than seeing them as a “third” group, which risks seeing them as a “false teaching” alongside docetism and Judaizing, it seems best to see this rather as a “tendency” amongst Ignatius’ readers. Note also Ehrman’s comment (\textit{Apostolic Fathers} 206-7) about Trevett’s view: “It is not clear, however, if his polemic in this case is directed against a specific group or a general tendency found throughout the
Evidence for Christians “opposing the bishop” comes from Ign. Eph. 5.2-3:

Let no one be deceived. Anyone who is not inside the sanctuary lacks the bread of God. For if the prayer of one or two persons has such power, how much more will that of the bishop and the entire church (καὶ ἐν θυσίαις τοῦνόματος τοῦ θεοῦ ἵνα ἐπλησθῇ ἡ κόσμῳ τῆς ὑποτάσεως)[51] 3) Therefore the one who does not join the entire congregation (ἐν θυσίαις τοῦ θεοῦ ἵνα ἐπλησθῇ ἡ κόσμῳ τῆς ὑποτάσεως) is already haughty and passes judgment on himself. For it is written, ‘God opposes the haughty.’ And so we should be eager not to oppose the bishop, that we may be subject to God.

Ignatius is referring to gatherings for worship here, as the reference to corporate prayer makes clear. The passage suggests that a small group of people are meeting together, but apart from the bishop and the rest of the church.[52] This is implied by the phrase “For if the prayer of one or two persons has such power, how much more will that of the bishop and the entire church (καὶ ἐν θυσίαις τοῦ θεοῦ ἵνα ἐπλησθῇ ἡ κόσμῳ τῆς ὑποτάσεως)” (Ign. Eph. 5.2). These people who are praying together are not, however, joining with the entire congregation (Ign. Eph. 5.3), which is the gathering under the bishop,[53] since these people are said to “oppose the bishop”. Nor are they “inside the sanctuary”, that is, they are not a part of the community over which the bishop presides, and so lack, in Ignatius’ opinion, the true “bread of God” (Ign. Eph. 5.2). Ignatius exhorts them to join with the bishop and the whole church, for then their prayer will be even more powerful.[54]

We see then that some Christians in Ephesus had a measure of independence from the bishop.[55] Ignatius regards such independence as haughtiness (Ign. Eph. 5.3);[56] the offenders should obey the bishop by coming together in unity in order that they may be subject to God, rather than be haughty. But the haughtiness of these people seems to be simply that they believe they can worship apart from the bishop.

Ignatius also addresses this issue in writing to Tralles. In Ign. Trall. 7.2 he writes: “The one who is inside the sanctuary is pure but the one outside the sanctuary is not pure. This means that the one who does anything apart from the bishop, the presbytery, and the deacons is not pure in conscience.” Again, it seems clear that some people are acting “apart from the bishop”.[57]

Thus, people seem to have been meeting “apart from the bishop” in Ephesus and Tralles and in each case no doctrinal issue seems to be at stake. The situation was similar, though slightly more complex, in Philadelphia.[58] Those who were meeting...
But why did some Christians in these cities “oppose the bishop”? Why would they pray and worship apart from him and not come to the bishop’s assembly or an assembly authorised by him when, as we have noted, no decisive theological differences were at stake? The evidence suggests that this was a time of transition

one bishop together with the presbytery and the deacons”. This suggests that there were rival eucharists in Philadelphia. Corwin (St. Ignatius 58) notes (her emphasis): “the emphasis on the one eucharist clearly suggests the existence of competing forms.” The likelihood of this is confirmed by Ign. Phld. 7.2-8.1: “‘Do nothing apart from the bishop; keep your flesh as the Temple of God; love unity; flee divisions ...’. I was therefore acting on my own accord as a person set on unity. But where there is division and anger, God does not dwell. Thus the Lord forgives all who repent, if they return to the unity of God and the council of the bishop.” C. Trevett, “Apocalypse, Ignatius, Montanism: Seeking the Seeds.” VC 43 (1989) 313-338, here 315 comments with respect to the situation at Philadelphia that “there was the possibility of meetings organised apart from the bishop and his circle, something Ignatius deplored (1; 3.2-3; 7.1; 8.1).” See also Ign. Phld. inscr. In keeping with this, the term μορφήματος (“division”) occurs five times in Ign. Phld. (2.1; 3.1; 7.2; 8.1) and only once elsewhere (Ign. Smyrn. 7.2). From the letter it seems clear that the “divisions” involved “false teaching” to some extent, in this case people Ignatius regarded as Judaizers (Ign. Phld. 6-9). The focus of the issue was on the interpretation of the Old Testament (see W.R. Schoedel, “Ignatius and the Archives,” HTR 71 (1978) 97-106). However, Schoedel (Ignatius 205) shows that there was no serious theological disagreement between Ignatius and these opponents, such as disagreement about the person of Christ or the place of the law. Further, Sumney (“Opponents” 357-8) argues that 6.1-2 with its mention of “interpreting Judaism to you” also addresses the interpretation of Scripture, which is the focus of 8.1-2. Hence, it is the expertise in scriptural interpretation of these opponents in the community which probably posed a threat to leaders. But in addition, it seems likely that a key issue with regard to “division” focussed on church governance. These opponents were the people who tried to deceive Ignatius (Ign. Phld. 7.1) and against whom he said: “Do nothing without the bishop” (Ign. Phld. 7.2), a proclamation the Spirit made through him. Thus Ign. Phld. 7.2-8.1 together with Ign. Phld. 4 suggest that there was a group within the community who acted apart from the bishop; see Trevett, Study 92-9. So although there are other issues involved (notably the interpretation of the Old Testament), there were no serious doctrinal issues, and one key factor at Philadelphia is also “opposing the bishop”. By contrast, Bauer (Orthodoxy 69) sees this as exclusively a doctrinal issue.

In both Smyrna and Magnesia, there similarly were people meeting apart from the bishop, but in each case theological issues seem to have been the key factor. In Ign. Smyrn. 8.1 he writes “Let no one do anything apart from the bishop that has to do with the church”, but this seems to refer to docetists who held their own eucharists and are opposing the bishop for theological reasons; see Ign. Smyrn. 7.1-9.1; see also Schoedel, Ignatius 240-4. In Magnesia, a group was meeting apart from the bishop (see Ig. Mgn. 4.1; 7.1-2; see Schoedel, Ignatius 116), but it seems likely that they were the Judaizers addressed in Ig. Mgn. 8.1-9.2.

We have noted that Ig. Eph. 5.2 suggests that some Ephesian Christians were meeting together, but apart from the bishop and the rest of the church. It is likely that these Christians were actually meeting together separately in one or more house churches (see Ig. Eph. 20.2; Ig. Mgn. 7.2; Corwin, St. Ignatius 85; Schoedel, Ignatius 240, 243). Those who are not meeting with the bishop, are probably meeting together in house churches, but apart from the bishop or without his approval (cf. Ig. Smyrn 7.1). This is suggested by Ig. Eph. 5.2 where the contrast between “the entire church” with the bishop and the powerful prayer of one or two apart from the rest of the church suggests that these one or two were meeting separately in a house church. Thus the Ephesian Christians were not united, but rather different groups seem to have existed, groups that were not all under the bishop Onesimus, who was not the undisputed bishop of Ephesus.

It seems unlikely that doctrinal differences were a factor in people opposing the bishop in Ephesus, since Ignatius makes it clear that, in his view, the Christian community he addressed did not tolerate false doctrine. After discussing the problem of those who “oppose the bishop” in Ig. Eph. 5.1-6.1 Ignatius then writes in 6.2: “Thus Onesimus himself praises you highly for being so well ordered in God, because all of you live according to the truth and no heresy resides among you. On the contrary, you no longer listen to anyone, except one who speaks truthfully about Jesus Christ.” Further, he emphasizes that they have not listened to the opponents (Ign. Eph. 9.1). I suggest in Trebilco, Early
with regard to church structure, and that one reason that some were “opposing the bishop” was that they were resisting these changes.

In Ign. Eph. 6.1 Ignatius refers to someone being sent in this way: “For we must receive everyone that the master of the house sends to take care of his affairs as if he were the sender himself. And so we are clearly obliged to look upon the bishop as the Lord himself.” Here, using material from Christian tradition, Ignatius is saying that the bishop has been “sent” by God the master of the house, and must be “received” by the Ephesians, since, according to tradition, the one sent by God must be received as God himself.\(^{61}\) This, and the comment that “we are clearly obliged to look upon the bishop as the Lord himself”, suggests that some Christians in Ephesus disagreed that the bishop had indeed been sent to them by God, and so did not receive him. Ignatius argues that Onesimus should be received, and his authority respected because he was sent by God. However, the passage suggests that one reason some Ephesians opposed the bishop was because they did not see him as one with God-given authority.\(^{62}\)

This indicates that some Ephesian Christians were resisting a change in church structure, which involved the bishop claiming to have authority over all the Christians in Ephesus. Monepiscopacy would have been a significant development for Christians used to leadership being provided by a group of presbyters, with no one person being regarded as the leader of the leaders.\(^{63}\) Some Ephesian Christians seem to have argued that the one bishop had not been “sent” to them by God, and need not be received. Thus they need not come to the bishop’s assembly, but rather could continue to meet separately. This points to a time of transition in church structure in Ephesus, a transition that was resisted by some Christians. Some were opposing the bishop because they did not agree with this change in church structure.\(^{64}\)

The weighty justification that Ignatius gives for the office of bishop,\(^{65}\) also suggests that this was a time of transition to a different leadership structure, and that some resisted this change because they wanted to hold on to a different church order.\(^{66}\) Further, Ignatius envisages the bishop having very broad and widespread control over the life of the community, control that was much broader than we see

\(^{61}\) On this see Schoedel, Ignatius 56 n15, with reference to Mt 21:33-41; Mt 10:40; Gal 4:14; Jn 13:20.
\(^{62}\) Trevett (“Apocalypse” 319) notes Ignatius’ language in Ign. Eph. 5.2–6.1 (cf. Jn 13:20) suggests the refusal to receive “as the Lord” those who were “sent” to them. She writes: “Bishops, in particular (and especially silent ones?) should be so received, Ignatius argued.”

\(^{63}\) Trevett (Study 113 n74) notes: “Developing monepiscopacy rather than episcopacy of the full-blown monarchical kind is reflected in these letters.”

\(^{64}\) This may explain the attention Ignatius gives to explaining away Onesimus’ silence (Ign. Eph. 6.1; 15.1-2). What Ignatius says about Onesimus’ silence is understandable if some groups of Christians in Ephesus did not want to grant to Onesimus the right to be bishop over them. Ignatius wanted to show Onesimus, in his eyes the bishop over all Ephesian Christians, in the best possible light and to explain away his shortcomings in order to convince everyone that they should acknowledge Onesimus. But on silence see now Maier, “Politics” 503-19.

\(^{65}\) See for example Ign. Phld. 3.2: “For all who are of God and Jesus Christ, these are with the bishop”. This shows how closely Ignatius identified being in the church with being with the bishop. The implication is that if one is not with the bishop, then one is not of God and Jesus Christ. This is very weighty justification for the episcopal office and suggests that this was a contentious point; see also Ign. Eph. 3.2; Ign. Mgn. 3.1-2; Mgn. 4.1; 6.1; 13.2; Ign. Trall. 2.1; 3.1; 13.2; Ign. Phld. inscr; 1.1; Ign. Smyrn. 8.1-2; 9.1; Ign. Pol. 6.1.

\(^{66}\) Perhaps they met apart from the bishop because they did not recognise his authority over them. Or perhaps this was how they had always met, and they were now opposing the attempts of a bishop to, as they saw it, “interfere” in their Christian group.
elsewhere at this time. This suggests that Ignatius was trying to consolidate and extend the authority of the bishop over the life of the church.

This evidence builds into a cumulative case that this was a time of transition with regard to church structure in the congregations to which Ignatius wrote in Asia Minor. He knew that many of his addressees were acting apart from the bishop, but also that they did not think this was wrong and so did not agree with Ignatius about the city-wide authority of the bishop. This suggests that some of his addressees were currently convinced about the rightness of a different, more collegial model of church order. This in turn shows that monepiscopacy was not well established in Asia, and in fact that one of the reasons that Ignatius was writing was to attempt to establish it more securely. But who were these Christians in Ephesus who were resisting such a change?

We can suggest that some Christians in Ephesus may have wanted to resist the change to monepiscopacy because they valued their current system of church order. There are two possibilities here. One aspect of the opposition to the growth of the power of the one bishop in Ephesus may have been from those who belonged to the Johannine community as witnessed to by 1-3 John. The evidence that this movement should be located in Ephesus is strong, and although they valued tradition-bearers like John the elder, they seem not to have had leaders who were appointed to particular offices, and the locus of authority was generally in the wider group. We can suggest that they would have resisted the developments towards a much more institutionalized church structure, including the development of monepiscopacy with the bishop claiming to have authority over all the Christians in Ephesus. They would have valued a much freer model of collegiality.

Secondly, another dimension of this opposition may have been from those who valued the prophetic model of leadership demonstrated by John the Seer. Trevett has noted that John wrote Revelation for Christians in Asia, including communities in Ephesus, Philadelphia and Smyrna. We can suggest that at least some of these Christians were convinced by what John wrote, and it seems likely that at least some of John’s readers were also convinced about and valued prophetic leadership and associated charismata. It would be unsurprising if they “opposed the bishop” and felt free to act apart from the bishop and without his authority. This view is supported by evidence that Ignatius was aware of the need to take account of the emphases of readers who valued charismata and found conducive the claim to prophetic inspiration which is fundamental to Revelation. Thus Christians who appreciated John’s

67 For example, to be valid a eucharist had to be held under the bishop’s control. This could be conducted by a person to whom the bishop entrusted the eucharist; see Ign. Smyrn. 8.1; Ign. Eph. 5.2; 20.2; Ign. Pld. 4.1; see S.M. Gibbard, “The Eucharist in the Ignatian Epistles.” In Studia Patristica Vol VIII (ed. F.L. Cross; Berlin: Akademie, 1966) Part 2, 214-18, here 215. Further, those who marry must do so with the approval of the bishop; see Ign. Pol. 5.2; Schoedel, Ignatius 273. See also Ign. Mgn. 7.1-2; Ign. Trll. 2.2; 7.2; Ign. Pld. 7.2; Ign. Smyrn. 8.2; Ign. Pol. 4.1; 7.2.
70 See D.E. Aune, Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) 291-316 on prophecy in early Christianity in the period from 90-150 CE.
71 On a number of occasions Ignatius defended his own status as a “charismatic”, or writes in a way that suggests that his readers valued prophecy or charismatic gifts; see Ign. Eph. 5.1; 15.2; 20.2; Ign.
Revelation may lie behind some of the opposition to Ignatius and his fellow episcopal officials.

Those who valued the ministry of prophets, or charismatic gifts more generally, thus probably formed one dimension of the opposition in Asia to the form of church order advocated by Ignatius. These people did not necessarily disagree with Ignatius theologically, but rather they seem to have been ambivalent in their attitude to the office of bishop and may have felt free to “oppose the bishop” and to act apart from him and without his authority. As office and order were changing these Christians may well have sought to retain their traditional freedoms for it seems clear that the order Ignatius advocated would limit the freedom that had previously been accorded to charismatics in some earlier forms of order.

We suggest then that those who were opposing the bishop in Ephesus included some from the Johannine community (who may have been meeting in separate house churches (Ign. Eph. 5.2-3)), and some of those who had received Revelation and valued the prophetic authority which is fundamental to that book.

What does all this mean with regard to Bauer’s thesis? Some of those who are in disagreement with the bishop are arguing about church structure, not about theology. They are not heretics – but advocates for a different form of church leadership. Bauer does not recognise this. This means that he considerably over-estimates the theological diversity among his addressees in Western Asia Minor. Actually, it seems much more likely that some Christians in Ephesus and Tralles and probably elsewhere as well, were resisting a change in church structure, rather than being theologically at variance with their bishops. Bauer has misread the evidence at this point.

4. The memory of Paul in Ephesus?

Bauer writes that in Revelation “the recollection of the Pauline establishment of the church of Ephesus appears to have been completely lost, or perhaps even deliberately suppressed. … now it is in danger of slipping into gnosticism … And as far as Paul is concerned, in the Apocalypse only the names of the twelve apostles are found on the foundations of the new Jerusalem (21.14); there is no room for Paul. And at the very least, it will be but a short time before the Apostle to the Gentiles will have been totally displaced in the consciousness of the church of Ephesus in favor of one of the twelve apostles, John. In Ephesus, Paul had turned out to be too weak to drive the enemies of the church from the battlefield.”

From the absence of the name of Paul in Revelation, Bauer concludes that Pauline influence was no longer present in Ephesus at the time that John wrote Revelation, nor did it continue in the early second century. Bauer concludes: “I can understand
this state of affairs, which I have sketched in bold strokes, only by supposing that in Ephesus a community of apostolic origin has, through its struggles with external enemies and above all through internal discord and controversies … suffered such setbacks and transformations that for many, even the name of its founder became lost.

But why does John not mention Paul in Revelation? Is it because Paul is no longer remembered there? The much more likely explanation is that some of John’s readers know the Pauline tradition well, but John has chosen not to speak of that tradition. It seems unlikely that Paul has been completely forgotten in Western Asia Minor. It is much more likely that John made no use of the knowledge of Paul that he had. The reason for this is that John’s main opposition in the seven churches was the Nicolaitans, who were involved in eating food offered to idols and in idolatry. Scholars have often drawn parallels between “the strong” at Corinth, and the Nicolaitans, and suggested that the Nicolaitans may have been influenced by Paul, or may have radicalised Paul’s teaching. Thus the Nicolaitans probably appealed to Paul for support. In doing so, they almost certainly went much further than Paul allowed, but given their claim that Paul supported them, if John was to appeal to Paul in Revelation, he would be playing into the hands of the Nicolaitans. They could claim, “The Paul of whom you speak supports us”. It seems reasonable to suggest that John has avoided any reference to Paul precisely because he is influential among John’s opponents. Faced with this situation, the path of wisdom for John was not to refer to Paul.

We will note shortly that there is also positive evidence for Pauline tradition in Western Asia Minor through this period. It is very unlikely then that Paul was forgotten in Western Asia Minor, as Bauer suggested. Rather, Pauline Christianity remained influential.

IV. WHAT WAS THE SITUATION IN WESTERN ASIA MINOR INTO THE EARLY SECOND CENTURY?

How then should we think of the situation of Christian communities in Western Asia Minor into the second century? Here I will be drawing on the “other witnesses” mentioned in my sub-title – “Ignatius and others as witnesses against Bauer”. I cannot develop this at length, but let me note some key points towards an alternative picture to that proposed by Bauer. I will discuss the evidence for the on-going influence of both Pauline and Johannine traditions and then will briefly note the development of “litmus tests” or criteria of belief and action, that demonstrate a growing concern for the delineation of “orthodoxy” in this area.

be the highest trump in the struggle with heresy. Only the canonization of the book of Acts and of the Pauline letters, including the Pastoral, once again provided clear insight into the real situation with respect to Paul.” He thinks the Pastoral were written around 140 (see below).

Bauer, Orthodoxy 85; see also 87.


1. Pauline influence

We have noted that Bauer thought Pauline influence vanished from Western Asia Minor. However, it seems clear that we have the following chain of Pauline influence in the area. In the early 50s, Paul established communities in Western Asia Minor. As part of the Pauline corpus we have 1 and 2 Timothy, which were written to Ephesus; if these letters were written by Paul, around 65 then they point to his continuing influence in Ephesus at the end of his life. If they are by a faithful Paulinist, writing perhaps around 80, then they testify to the on-going importance of Pauline tradition at this date. Bauer does not give sufficient credence to this evidence, since he thinks the Pastoral were written after 140 CE.

It seems likely that the writing of Acts, probably around 80 CE, would have increased the profile of Paul. Surely one of the places to which the book of Acts would quickly have been sent, and where it would have been avidly read, was Western Asia Minor, which featured so prominently in the story. That Polycarp probably knew Acts reinforces this. It would quickly have supplemented the image of Paul among its readers. Bauer overlooks the importance of Acts here.

79 See Bauer, *Orthodoxy* 83-4. We cannot go into the wider question of Paul’s influence in the second century. But note that W.S. Babcock, ed. *Paul and the Legacies of Paul* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1990) ix argues against the view “that Paul’s most characteristic theological themes were taken up by marginal or heretical Christian groups, but were repressed or diminished by the groups that would turn out to be central to the emerging Christian tradition”. By contrast he argues that (Babcock, *Paul xiv-xv*) “Paul could be and was deployed against the ‘heretics’ quite as much as by the ‘heretics’; and it is not unfair to suggest that on the ‘orthodox’ side, the Pauline texts were woven into a theology that would not have had the character that it did if Paul had not written what he wrote or been accorded the authority he was accorded.”

80 See 1 Tim 1:3; 2 Tim 1:18; 4:12.


82 See Trebilco, *Early Christians* 197-205; Norris, “Asia Minor” 371. Bauer (*Orthodoxy* 223-8) overlooks the significance of the Pastoral for the strength of Pauline tradition in Western Asia Minor at this point, since he thinks that Paul was rescued from Gnostic heretics through the Pastoral Epistles being written and added to the collection of Paul’s writings, around 140 CE. But there are strong arguments that Polycarp used the Pastoral much earlier than this; see Hartog, *Polycarp* 178-9.

83 Bauer thought the Pastoral had not been written by 140 CE, when Marcion made his collection of Paul’s letters; see Bauer, *Orthodoxy* 222-7. Against this, see for example Norris, “Asia Minor” 370-1; Hartog, *Polycarp* 90-1.


86 Bauer notes (*Orthodoxy* 85): “Only the canonization of the book of Acts and of the Pauline letters, including the Pastoral, once again provided clear insight into the real situation with respect to Paul.” He refers to Irenaeus *Adv. Haer*. 3.3.4 and the Acts of Paul at this point, and so clearly thinks of canonization (and hence the impact of Acts) as occurring late in the second century.
Ignatius shows that knowledge of Paul was a live in Ephesus when he wrote. In Ign. Eph. 12.2 we read: “You are a passageway for those slain for God; you are fellow initiates with Paul, the holy one who received a testimony and proved worthy of all fortune. When I attained to God, may I be found in his footsteps, this one who mentions you in every epistle in Christ Jesus.”

Bauer thinks this is “in no way based upon Paul’s apostolic activity but rather on the fact that the road to martyrdom, which Paul also travelled, leads past this city”. But that Ignatius can praise the Ephesians as “fellow initiates with Paul (Ποιμανάρχης συμμαθητάδος)” and is clearly aware that Paul mentions the Ephesians in his letters, strongly suggests that the Ephesians Ignatius had talked with had spoken of this as an important matter to them (and note that he had spoken with a number of Ephesians), and Ignatius knows that the reference to Paul will be well received amongst his Ephesian readers. It is evidence then for the vitality of traditions about Paul amongst some of Ignatius’ Ephesian readers.

Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, whose letter to the Philippians can be dated with confidence to around 110-115 CE, refers to Paul three times, including writing of “the wisdom of the blessed and glorious Paul”, which Polycarp says “neither I nor anyone like me is able to replicate” (Pol. Phil. 3.2). It is clear that Polycarp admired and valued Paul, and regarded him as an authority. Polycarp also knows a number of Paul’s letters - Romans 1 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and 1...
Timothy, with use of 2 Corinthians and 2 Timothy being probable. But Pauline influence is not limited to particular allusions, since Polycarp is indebted to Paul for particular elements in his thought. As Lindemann notes “There is certainly no basis for the notion that Paul was forgotten or unimportant in the (wing of the) church in which ‘Clement,’ Ignatius, and Polycarp did their work.” We have a strong case then for Pauline influence continuing in Smyrna at this time. Bauer again does not take sufficient note of this evidence.

So, it seems most likely that there was on-going influence from Pauline thought in Western Asia Minor from Paul’s day to the time of Polycarp. This is certainly more likely than Bauer’s view that Paul was completely forgotten. This does not mean that

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95 See Hartog, Polycarp 177-9, 195, 228-31. For example, Gal 6:7 in Pol. Phil. 5.1; Rom 14:10-12 is used in Pol. Phil. 6.2; I Cor 6:2 is referred to in Pol. Phil. 11.2. Use of 2 Thess is possible. This issue is complicated by the fact that Polycarp seems to have usually quoted from memory; see Hartog, Polycarp 172. On determining when literary borrowing from the NT has occurred, see the very important discussion in Hill, Johannine Corpus 67-71, 425-7.

96 Lindemann (“Paul” 43) notes that Pauline influence in Phil extends to more general features of Polycarp’s theology (rather than simply being limited to allusions to specific verses). He notes “the transition from 1.3 to 2.1 is again reminiscent of the Pauline movement from indicative to imperative… At 3.2-3, one of the passages where Paul is mentioned by name, we find the well-known triad of pistis, elpis, and agape;… the Haustafel in 4.2-6.2 alludes to the corresponding deutero-Pauline texts, with a quotation of Galatians 6:7 inserted at 5:1… and when, at the end of 6.1, Polycarp writes that ‘we are all debtors to sin,’ we should note that hamartia is in the singular. This linguistic usage, rarely found outside the Pauline literature, is the mark of a substantial Pauline theological influence.” Any one of these points may perhaps be questioned, but when taken with the other points above, they become much more likely. Lindemann (“Paul” 44) also argues that Pauline theology in general had an influence on Polycarp.


98 Hartog (Polycarp 194) notes a very interesting case, involving the expression “pouring over” a text, using the verb σφυκυσμετάπτω. He writes: “1 Clement repeatedly refers to ‘pouring over’ the Scriptures, by which he means the Old Testament (1 Clement 45.2: 53.1; 62.3; cf. 40.1). These Clementine references occur in paraenetic ‘disavowals of need for further instruction’: the Corinthians had pored over the Scriptures. As we have noted, Polycarp knew 1 Clement ‘almost by heart.’ But Polycarp applies Clement’s favorite term to the Pauline corpus: Paul ‘when he was absent wrote letters to you, from the study of which (ευθυς σφυκυσμετάπτεσα) you will be able to build yourselves up into the faith given you’ (Phil 3.2). Polycarp appears to place the Pauline letters on the level of authoritative writings, since they require treatment similar to that of the Hebrew Scriptures.” But note also the discussion of “which Paul” it is who is influential – the Paul of the letters, or “the ecclesiastical Paul” (that is, the image of Paul built up by the church) in M.C. de Boer, “Comment: Which Paul?” in Paul and the Legacies of Paul (ed. W.S. Babcock; Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1990) 45-54, here 48-54.

99 See Bauer, Orthodoxy 212-228. Hartog (Polycarp 219) notes: “Bauer’s reconstruction places great weight on the lack of Paul in mid-[second] century material and brushes aside earlier works (1 Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp); but as Barrett notes, ‘not, I think, successfully.’ Bauer argues that these Apostolic Fathers only evidence knowledge of 1 Corinthians [see Bauer, Orthodoxy 219]. But Paul is far more important to Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp, than Bauer would have us believe. The present study has revealed that Polycarp knew and used numerous Pauline works.” (The reference is to C.K. Barrett, “Pauline Controversies in the Post-Pauline Period,” NTS 20 (1973-74) 229-245, here 238.) Koester (Introduction 307) also argues that Polycarp knew Paul’s writings. Note Hill’s comment (Johannine Corpus 417) that Polycarp’s “reference to Paul, however, is quite tailored to its context. Polycarp is writing to a Pauline church in Philippi which had, as far as we know, no Johannine foundation or presence. Writing at their invitation (3. 1), he mentions Paul specifically because of his personal ministry in the Philippian church (3. 2; 11. 3; already alluded to in 2. 2, a faith ‘which was famous in past years’).”

100 We have sought to explain the silence of John in Revelation about Paul above. Of course, this does not mean that the profundities of Pauline theology were grasped by everyone.
some of Paul’s communities did not encounter difficulties – Acts 20:30 speaks of this and the fact that Luke includes it shows that it was true in his time. But encountering difficulties with regard to false teachers is one thing; completely losing all memory of Paul is another. Again, Bauer’s treatment can be seen to be inadequate. We certainly have good evidence that suggests that Pauline Christianity was a strong and significant component of Christian tradition into the early second century.

2. Johannine influence

Note also the chain of Johannine influence in Western Asia Minor. It seems likely that John, the author of the Gospel, arrived in Ephesus around the time of the Jewish War of 66-70 CE, and there are very strong grounds for Ephesus as the place where John’s Gospel was written, probably in the 80s. Slightly later 1-3 Jn were written to a community in and around Ephesus, and bear witness to the on-going impact of Johannine thought in the area. Whilst Revelation is not written by the same person as the Gospel, it is clearly linked theologically to the Gospel and shows the on-going impact of the broader Johannine movement in Western Asia Minor.

The oldest clear allusion to 1 John is by Polycarp of Smyrna, writing around 110-115 CE. Although Polycarp does not directly quote John’s Gospel, the broader

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101 It has often been thought, as Bauer argued, that John’s Gospel was first used by the heretics. See Bauer, Orthodoxy 206-8; on this see Hill, Johannine Corpus 13-15. He writes (15): “Bauer was convinced that none of the Apostolic Fathers had relied on the authority of the Fourth Gospel. It was the gnostics, the Marcionites, and the Montanists who first used it and introduced it to the Christian community in Rome.” Hill (Johannine Corpus) convincingly opposes what he takes to be the consensus view that (2) “the reception of this Gospel by heterodox groups is said to have been swift and enthusiastic, while among the orthodox it endured a long and mighty struggle for acceptance, until about the time of Irenaeus.” He calls this (3) “orthodox Johannophobia” – the hesitation by orthodox writers to use the fourth Gospel because of gnostic use. He shows that there was no silence among the writers of the mainstream Church with regard to the Fourth Gospel, which was known and used by many authors; see passim: the chart on p450 is a helpful summary.

102 For evidence of Jewish migration at this time, see Josephus Ant. 20.256; JW 7.410-19; Eusebius H.E. 3.31.3; 5.24.2; see Robinson, Bauer Thesis 98; Trebilco, Early Christians 270-1. On the authorship of the Fourth Gospel see Trebilco, Early Christians 241-258.


104 See Trebilco, Early Christians 263-90.


107 Hill (Johannine Corpus 416-20) argues for allusions to the Gospel of John in Polycarp’s letter. He also notes (Hill, Johannine Corpus 417) “it is likely that the Fourth Gospel did not figure prominently in this letter simply because it offered less paraenetic material for the letter’s particular purpose.” Note also that Polycarp’s letter is brief, and his two references to Paul are in the context of allusions to Paul’s letter to the Philippians; of course John did not write to Philippi. Hill also notes that Polycarp’s use of 1 Jn suggests he also knows the Gospel of John. Note also that according to Eusebius (H.E. 5.24.2-7) Polycarp followed Quartodeciman practice; this probably shows the influence of John’s Gospel; see Hartog, Polycarp 188.
Johannine tradition, as shown in 1 John, is clearly known in Smyrna at this time. Hill has argued strongly that Ignatius knew the Fourth Gospel. This relates more strongly to the situation in Antioch, but it is also relevant to Western Asia Minor. Papias of Hierapolis, who wrote between 120-135, gives the first six disciples in an order which reflects John’s Gospel, and additional strong arguments can also be offered that he knew the Fourth Gospel.100

There is also evidence for the knowledge of John’s Gospel in Asia Minor. Hill argues strongly for its provenance in Asia Minor.112 It was probably written sometime in the 140s in Asia Minor, perhaps Smyrna, although it could also be dated just before 120.113

Thus, we can trace a chain of Johannine tradition in Western Asia Minor from the probable arrival of John in Ephesus around 70 CE, to the Johannine community

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108 There are good grounds for accepting the authenticity of the claim made by Irenaeus that Polycarp knew John “the disciple of the Lord” (probably John the elder); see Irenaeus Adv. Haer. 3.3.4; Eusebius H.E. 5.20.6; 5.24.16; Hartog, Polycarp 37-41; Hengel, Johannine Question 102-8; R. Bauckham, “Papias and Polycrates on the Origin of the Fourth Gospel,” JTS n.s. 44 (1993) 24-69.

109 See Hill, Johannine Corpus 421-43; he cites others who are of this opinion. See for example Ign. Mgn. 7.1 and Jn 5:19; 8:28 and Ign. Phld. 7.1 and Jn 3:6, 8; 8:14. See also the Committee of the Oxford Society of Historical Theology, New Testament 81-3 who note (83) “Irenaeus” use of the Fourth Gospel is highly probable, but falls some way short of certainty.” Compare Koester, “Ephesos” 135.

110 See Hill, Johannine Corpus 385-396. See Eusebius, quoting Papias in H.E. 3.39.4; cf. John 1:40, 21:2. See also the additional argument given in Hill, Johannine Corpus 386-94 regarding Eusebius H.E. 3.24.5-13, for which he thinks the source is Papias. Compare Bauer’s comments (Orthodoxy 187): “the other two gospels [Luke and John] are at least suspect to him … the Fourth Gospel, no doubt, because of its content, origin, and the friends it had made. After all, the preference of the Montanists and Valentinians for the Fourth Gospel shows us that ecclesiastical circles were not the first in which it was recognized as a canonical expression of a particular religious persuasion.” Hill, Johannine Corpus, convincingly refutes this view. Note also the tradition that “the elders” are said to have been conversant with John in Asia; see Irenaeus Adv. Haer. 2.22.5. “The presbyters” quoted by Irenaeus in Adv. Haer. 5.36.1-2, are clearly making use of John’s Gospel as a source of Jesus’ teaching; see Hill, Johannine Corpus 407-416. But we do not know that they were definitely in Asia (as those mentioned in Adv. Haer. 2.22.5 are).


113 See Hill, Johannine Corpus 367. Hengel (Johannine Question 12-14) also argues strongly that Justin Martyr knows and uses the Fourth Gospel; cf. R.A. Culpepper, John, the Son of Zebedee (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994) 112-14. The on-going use of the Fourth Gospel in Asia is also noteworthy. Hengel (Johannine Question 5) comments: “This special significance of the Johannine Corpus (including the Apocalypse) for theology in Asia Minor becomes especially visible in the paschal dispute and the Montanist movement: the typology of the passover lamb and the chronology of the passion in the Fourth Gospel support the Quartodecimans custom of the paschal feast as practised in Asia Minor; the new prophetic movement starting from Montanus and his prophetesses could hardly have come into being without the link between the Gospel and the Apocalypse; … In the Montanist prophecy the Paraclete promised in the Farewell Discourses spoke to believers, and according to Maximilla the heavenly Jerusalem of Apocalypse 21 was to descend in Pepuza. However, J.J. Gunther is surely misleading in stating that ‘the creation of a Johannine Asian myth started with Montanism’. This new prophetic movement, beginning about 157 (?), already presupposed it.” Thus, we see there is considerable evidence for the impact of John’s Gospel in Asia Minor in the mid-second century. See also Hartog (Polycarp, 188, quoting Farmer and Farkasfalvy): “The Gospel of John was the Gospel of Asia Minor, as the Quartodeciman controversy reveals.”
This on-going chain of both Pauline and Johannine tradition in Western Asia Minor strongly counters Bauer’s thesis. He suggests that “heresy” is both early and strong. But here we have evidence, from the 50s in the case of Pauline tradition, and probably from the 80s in the case of Johannine tradition, through to the 120s and later, for the on-going “presence” and importance of both Johannine and Pauline tradition in Western Asia Minor. As far as we can tell, both are “on-going” traditions. Now of course, there were strong “counter-voices” – the opponents combated in the Pastoral, the secessionists mentioned in 1 and 2 Jn, the Nicolaitans, the docetists and Judaizers combated by Ignatius. But the presence of what became the orthodox group – here Pauline and Johannine tradition - is early, strong and as far as we can tell, continuous.

The strength and solidity of what we could call proto-orthodoxy is impressive. I would suggest that this reconstruction has much stronger support in the actual evidence than Bauer’s.

3. Discerning right belief and behaviour in Western Asia Minor

I would like to touch on one other area in relation to Bauer’s thesis regarding Western Asia Minor. Recall that Bauer thought heresy was often early and in the majority.

But note that in the New Testament literature from this area we find a strong element of drawing what we might call “exclusionary lines” of belief and practice, and of drawing these lines in such a way that they are in continuity with later orthodoxy. This evidence suggests that, as far as Western Asia Minor is concerned, “orthodoxy” is not a later imposition of an alien form, but rather a natural outgrowth of something that has its roots in the NT period.

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114 Use of Pauline or Johannine texts by a writer does not necessarily mean that the majority of the community of which he was a part was “orthodox”. But given that Bauer denies the importance of both Paul’s writings and John’s Gospel in this period in Western Asia Minor, this evidence is significant. Further, this evidence also shows that we know of a number of influential, non-heretical Christian teachers and leaders who valued some of the key texts of later “orthodoxy”.

115 This is simply the point to which we have limited our enquiry, and is not to suggest a sudden decline at this point. On the situation for the rest of the second century see Babcock, Paul and Hill, Johannine Corpus.


117 This is not to say that the “drawing of the lines” is not present in other documents, but my focus here is Western Asia Minor. Of course, many, perhaps all, groups were involved in “drawing the lines” against others. My point in this section is that the lines we see drawn in these texts are in continuity with later orthodoxy.
Both the Pastoral Epistles and the Johannine Letters were written with “opponents” in view. In the Pastoral we see the drawing of boundary lines around the group, and in the case of 1 Jn, a group had already left the community addressed and the author shows what the basis for their departure has been. In both cases we see lines of exclusion emerging. The opponents in view in the Pastoral had an over-realised eschatology and so thought the resurrection had already arrived, practised asceticism, maintained the validity of part of the Jewish Law and their behaviour led to adverse comment from outsiders. In response, in the Pastoral we see “boundary lines” being drawn with regard to eschatology, asceticism, the Law and behaviour. For 1 John, the crucial matter was the Christology of the secessionists; it seems likely that they so emphasised the divinity of Christ that they marginalised his humanity. In response, 1 John emphasises the importance of the “flesh” of Jesus.

Thus the two communities are developing “exclusionary principles” of belief and practice, or can be seen as drawing the “fault-lines”. One feature of this is the development of “litmus tests” (to change the metaphor) that a group used with regard to their “opponents”, leading to their exclusion (or departure in the case of the secessionists). This sort of “drawing the fault-lines” continues in Revelation, and in Ignatius’ writing with regard to Western Asia Minor.

So in the literature from Western Asia Minor we find a strong sense of applying criteria by which to judge whether, in the opinion of the author and his community, a certain belief or practice is in keeping with the tradition. This trend is consonant with the sense of “the tradition”, “sound teaching”, or “the truth” that we find in these documents. Most importantly, the links in the chain of belief and practice extend from these documents to what became “orthodoxy” in the later period. The “fault-lines” or lines of demarcation drawn by NT authors to determine the limits of acceptable belief and behaviour are in continuity with later “orthodoxy”. For example, in the Pastoral we have the affirmation of the goodness of creation in 1 Tim 4:1-5; the later

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120 In Revelation, note for example what he says about the Nicolaitans; see Rev 2:6, 14-16, 20-23. We also see this strongly in Ignatius; see for example Ign. Mgn. 10.1: “For this reason, since we are his disciples, let us learn to live according to Christianity. For whoever is called by a name other than this does not belong to God.” This is one of the reasons that Ignatius calls for subjection to the bishop; see Ign. Trall. 13.2; Ign. Eph. 6.1; Ign. Mgn. 7.1.

121 In the Pastoral see 1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:12-14; and the use of “the faith” for the content of what is believed; see 1 Tim 1:19; 3:9; 4:1; 6; 5:8; 12; 6:10, 12, 21; 2 Tim 1:5; 2:18; 3:8; 4:7. In the Johannine Letters, note the emphasis on “what was from the beginning”; see 1 Jn 1:1; 2:7, 24; 3:11; 2 Jn 5-6, 9-10; 3 Jn 3, 12. For sound teaching in the Pastoral see 1 Tim 1:10; 4:6; 6:3; 2 Tim 1:13; 4:3; Tit 1:9, 13; 2:1, 2. 8. For “the truth” in the Johannine Letters see 1 Jn 1:8; 2:4, 21; 3:18-19; 4:6; 5:6; 2 Jn 1-4; 2 Jn 1, 3-4, 8, 12.

122 Hill (Johannine Corpus 4-5) helpfully notes some “theological commonalities” in the second century which “served as boundaries between them [those later considered ‘orthodox’] and many of the ‘losers’.” He also (p6) argues that “There was … not only a concept of what belonged to ‘right’ or ‘orthodox’ teaching and what was characteristic of the ‘catholic’ Church in the second century, but also an evolving use of these very terms.” Hultgren (Rise 1) writes: “it is fitting to raise the question whether there was a ‘normative’ Christianity that was set on its course in apostolic times, providing basic norms for the flowering of orthodoxy later.” He answers the question positively, and seeks to describe this “normative Christianity” in the book.
affirmation against Gnostics is in continuity with this. And in 1 and 2 John we have the affirmation (itself forming a “litmus test”) of the true flesh of Jesus. Again, the later affirmation of the true humanity of Jesus against docetists is in keeping with this.

Thus the roots of later “orthodoxy” are to be found here. “Orthodoxy” is not to be seen as a later victory by those in power, or something determined by the majority. It goes back to the much earlier period. And although in that earlier period it would be anachronistic to speak of “orthodoxy”, the polemic against “opponents” in literature from Western Asia Minor reveals a strong sense of doctrinal self-consciousness on the part of the canonical authors. For the authors show that they are aware of holding a doctrinal or behavioural position that they wish to defend. This sense of a limit, self-consciously adopted, is a very significant feature of Western Asia Minor then. And what is self-consciously adopted and defended is in continuity with later orthodoxy.

Accordingly, we gain a quite different sense of early Christianity in Western Asia Minor from that given by Bauer. It would be wrong to think of the period from 65 to around 135 in Western Asia Minor as originating with and dominated by heresy, or as a blur of different groups in which there was no attention given to “right belief”, or where there was no sense of “the centre of the faith”. Whilst there were noteworthy examples of what was regarded at the time as “false belief”, where we can judge the matter this was not first, nor was it in the majority. And whilst there was significant diversity amongst groups that are found in the canon, there was also a strong sense of what we can call proto-orthodoxy, or embryonic orthodoxy, found alongside the “drawing of boundary lines of belief and practice”.

V. CONCLUSIONS

I hope to have shown that Bauer’s thesis does not stand up to scrutiny with regard to the situation in Western Asia Minor. Where we can investigate the matter, what Bauer calls “heresy” is neither the earliest form of Christian faith, nor is it in the majority. None of this is to deny that there was significant diversity within earliest Christianity, both in the New Testament period and in the second century, nor that there was theological development from the New Testament period onwards. But in his reconstruction, Bauer has overlooked some key elements of the evidence.

By contrast, in the period from around 65 to 135, we can argue that there were strong and influential voices which stood for what later became “orthodoxy”, notably voices in both the Pauline and Johannine traditions. Further, in the documents bearing witness to these traditions, we find a strong concern to discern what the authors regarded as acceptable belief and practice – which is in continuity with what later became orthodoxy. The situation in Western Asia Minor in the early second century thus supports a quite different scenario from that proposed by Bauer.

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124 See 1 Jn 4:2; 2 Jn 7; see for example Pol. Phil. 7.1; Irenaeus, Adv. Haer. 1.23.3; 24.2-4; 3.16.1; 3.18.6-7; 4.33.5; 5.1.2; see also G. Bray, G. James, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude (ACCS 11; Downers Grove: IVP, 2000) 209-10, 235-6.
125 For a similar point see Turner, Pattern 63.